



Van Gogh, Sower with the Setting Sun, 1888, public domain.

MDiv REFLECTION GROUPS

SM120-1

Fall 2023 (Continued in Spring 2024)

Tuesdays 3:00-4:20pm

LEARNING CULTIVATOR: Marcus Hong, mhong@lpts.edu

CREDIT: 1.5 credits/sem. for a total of 3 credits. Taken alongside at least one semester of a Field Education placement. This is a required MDiv course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Second year reflection groups combine field-based and classroom learning in order to encourage participants to deepen practical, spiritual and interpretive toolkits through the shared wisdom gained from communal reflection on the practice of ministry. Within small groups, students are encouraged to make connections among different parts of the seminary's curriculum and community life, to deepen and clarify their sense of vocation, and to practical theological reflection broadly understood as generative conversation between tradition and experience.

PREREQUISITES: A field placement is ordinarily required to be **concurrent** with second year reflection groups.

GOALS: We hope that students will

- Develop practical wisdom for ministry and begin to employ frameworks for practical theological reflection and interpretation;
- Experience ministry collaboratively, reflecting with a community willing to wrestle together on issues of importance to each group member;
- Learn techniques to assess theologically and sense intuitively a community's context, culture, and processes in order to guide ministry within that community and its context;
- Explore processes to help a congregation grow in faithfulness and discipleship;
- Develop a clearer sense of self as a pastoral/congregational leader; and,
- Value and cultivate spiritual formation for themselves and others.

These goals, along with work in the field education placement, support MDiv Program Goal 5 (Revised, Spring 2023):

SLO 5: Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry -

as demonstrated by effectiveness in and reflection upon such activities as:

- Offering leadership that emerges from the framework of a congregation's or organization's communions, confessions, and polity
- Preaching, teaching, and leading worship
- Praying and teaching others to pray
- Leading an organization effectively
- Providing public leadership and witness
- Inviting others into the Christian faith
- Offering pastoral care
- Participating in constructive intra-Christian and interreligious engagement.

TEACHING METHODS: We will utilize lectures, panel discussions, group discussion, congregational projects, and case study reflection. Students will also complete several reflective projects and will archive artifacts that demonstrate their learning around the seminary's Student Learning Objectives (SLOs).

FALL SEMESTER SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT	DUE
TILLING THE SOIL			
SEP 12	Introductions, Part I		
SEP 19	Introductions, Part II	Weekly Tanka Poem	In Class
SOWING SEEDS			
SEP 26	QUESTIONING CALLING PART I Vocational Touchstone <i>What Is the Work Your Soul Must Have?</i>	Reflective Piece 1 Weekly Tanka Poem	In Class In Class
BUILDING A TRELLIS			
OCT 3	CONSTRUCTION COHERENCE PART I Spiritual Practices and Life Frameworks <i>What Holds Our Lives Together?</i>	Reflective Piece 2 Weekly Tanka Poem Reflective Piece 3	In Class In Class Fri., Oct. 6, 5:00PM
OCT 10	CONFOUNDING CONCERNS Ministerial Ethics <i>How Do We Engage Challenging Situations?</i>	Weekly Tanka Poem	In Class
OCT 17	Research and Study - No Class	Reflective Piece 4	Fri., Oct. 21, 5:00PM
OCT 24	CONSTRUCTION COHERENCE PART II The Stories We Live By <i>What stories shape and ground our ministerial identity?</i>	Weekly Tanka Poem <i>Case Study Presenters 1</i>	In Class <i>Thu., Oct. 26, 10:00PM</i>
(AT)TENDING THE GARDEN PART I			
OCT 31	Case Study 1	Case Study 1 Feedback Weekly Tanka Poem <i>Case Study Presenters 2</i>	Mon., Oct. 30, 5:00PM In Class <i>Thu., Nov. 2, 10:00PM</i>
NOV 7	Case Study 2	Case Study 2 Feedback Weekly Tanka Poem <i>Case Study Presenters 3</i>	Mon., Nov. 6, 5:00PM In Class <i>Thu., Nov. 9, 10:00PM</i>
NOV 13	Case Study 3	Case Study 3 Feedback Weekly Tanka Poem <i>Case Study Presenters 4</i>	Mon., Nov. 13, 5:00PM In Class <i>Thu., Nov. 16, 10:00PM</i>
NOV 21	Case Study 4	Case Study 4 Feedback Weekly Tanka Poem	Mon., Nov 20, 5:00PM In Class
GLEANING PART I			
NOV 28	Gleanings and Artifact Sharing	Reflective Piece 5 DRAFT Artifact Catalog Weekly Tanka Poem Artifact Catalog Reflection	In Class In Class In Class Fri., Dec. 1, 5:00PM
DEC 5	No Class		

ASSIGNMENTS

More detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided on CANVAS

Assignment	Brief Description	Due Date	Points
Weekly Tanka Poem	Writing 10 Weekly Tanka Poems across the semester	Various, In Class	10 1 per
Reflective Piece 1	Either a 1 page (maximum) reflection, or artwork answering the prompts for "What Is the Work Your Soul Must Have?"	Tue., Sep. 26, In Class	3
Reflective Piece 2	Response to the prompts for spiritual practices and life frameworks	Tue., Oct. 3, Class	3
Reflective Piece 3	Insights on Ethical Statements; Brief personal statement of ethics; questions for the panel	Fri., Oct. 6, 5:00PM	3
Reflective Piece 4	Personal story that shapes ministerial identity	Fri., Oct. 21, 5:00PM	3
Case Study	Approx. 2-3 page (single space) case study, written according to a provided format. Each student writes 1 case study per semester, but there are 4 dates for case study presentation, with 1-2 presenters per day. Case studies are due on the Thursday <i>before</i> the presentation so that your fellow small group members have a chance to read and comment on the case studies by Monday before class	Case Study Group 1 <i>Thu., Oct. 26, 10:00PM</i> Case Study Group 2 <i>Thu., Nov. 2, 10:00PM</i> Case Study Group 3 <i>Thu., Nov. 9, 10:00PM</i> Case Study Group 4 <i>Thu., Nov. 16, 10:00PM</i>	18
DRAFT Artifact Catalog	A listing of at least 1 artifact per MDiv SLO, with explanations for why you placed each artifact in their SLO category	Tue, Nov. 28, In Class	14
Reflective Piece 5	Either a 1 page (maximum) reflection, or artwork responding to the prompt about what you gleaned from the course this semester.	Tue., Nov. 28, In Class	3
Artifact Catalog Reflection	A 1 page reflection on what you learned about the Artifact Catalog assignment, based upon what others in your small group shared.	Fri., Dec. 1, 5:00PM	3
Attending	Being present to the course and your classmates. You only start to lose these points if you miss <i>more than 3</i> classes - 25% of the course (see the academic catalog); and/or neglect to provide feedback on your peers' Case Studies. For each class beyond 3 and/or opportunity to provide feedback that you miss you lose 3 points.	Case Study Feedback Mon., Oct. 30, 5:00PM Mon., Nov. 6, 5:00PM Mon., Nov. 13, 5:00PM Mon., Nov. 20, 5:00PM	40

A RATIONALE FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT

(Why are we doing this?)

Why turn in something at all? Why can't the course simply be talking about our experiences? There are a couple of reasons. 1) Some people are less inclined to "think on their feet." They are not external processors. Having assignments that can be turned in enables those people to have time to process and articulate their thoughts. 2) Processing something before and/or after an experience and before and/or after a discussion enables a deeper level of reflection and learning. Pedagogical philosopher Paulo Freire calls this having a perception of our previous perception, and it is key to his liberatory pedagogy of "conscientization." Writing something down, or creating some kind of art invites us to clarify how we are thinking/feeling/being and then, when we reflect on that with others, we gain insight into the *ways* that we think/feel/be.

For this course, instead of a primary source of scripture, or a theologian, or a historical record, the primary source is *you* and *your ministry context* and *the people with whom you are in ministry*. In order to "read" these primary sources, it is helpful to "express" what you are experiencing. To "express" is to "press out." Like purifying metal, sifting soil to find gold, or cleaning water through a filter, the process of reflecting *once* through some type of medium (written, audio, visual, embodied), then reflecting *again* within a trusting community enables us to recognize more clearly what and how we are thinking, feeling, being.

Reflective Piece 1 - What Is the Work Your Soul Must Have? - The reflection pieces built into this course are meant to be the sorts of things that you carry with you throughout your ministry. They are meant to be touchstones that you come back to when you face challenges, or when you need to be re-centered. This first piece asks you to express why it is you have chosen to explore or to engage in ministry. As Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon once put it: What is the work your soul must have? This reflective piece also serves as Part I of a year-long ABCD project. To remind us that we learn and process in multiple ways, this reflective piece can either be a brief written reflection, or a song, or a poem, or a visual painting, or a collage, or a video diary, or a dance, or a series of cartoons, or, or, or...

Reflective Piece 2 - What Holds Our Lives Together - Spiritual Practices and Life Frameworks - This second reflective piece asks you to reflect upon your current spiritual practices. What sustains and roots you? What is stretching you, helping you to branch out and grow?

Reflective Piece 3 - How Do We Engage Challenging Situations - Ministerial Ethics - This third reflective piece asks you to write for yourself a statement of ministerial ethics, after reviewing and comparing statements of ethics from a couple of different denominations/faith communities (one in which you are rooted, and one which is a

stretch for you). It also asks you to put forward a few questions for a panel of veteran ministers who will be invited to respond and offer wisdom.

Reflective Piece 4 - What Stories Shape and Ground Our Ministerial Identity - The Stories We Live By - This fourth reflective piece asks you to write down a personal story that lies at the heart of your understanding of your ministerial identity. By sharing our stories, we build our community of learning; we also gain another touchstone in which to root our ministry.

Case Study - The case study lies at the heart of reflective ministry, and of the integration of your classroom and book-based learning with the on-the-ground realities of your ministry context. Case study presentation hones the skills of observation, reflection, and contextual hermeneutical interpretation. It then relies upon communal, shared wisdom within a small group to complete meaning-making around an event (either positive or negative) in ministry that has produced enduring questions.

Artifact Catalog - The artifact catalog helps you to keep track of artifacts that you are collecting throughout your seminary career, so that you can eventually reflect upon these artifacts in order to create your portfolio during your final year. It also asks you to reflect upon each artifact and what it says about your learning.

Artifact Catalog Reflection - This brief reflection expresses what you learned about completing this project through hearing about what your fellow small group members included in their catalogs and how they interpreted the SLOs.

Reflective Piece 5 - Gleanings - This final reflective piece asks you to reflect upon your learning this semester. Doing this periodically can enable you to move beyond the transient and piecemeal nature of all of the assignments that you accrue in seminary, and to consider with gratitude, lament, and curiosity both what you have learned, what you have unlearned, and what you still hope to learn. To remind us that we learn and process in multiple ways, this reflective piece can either be a brief written reflection, or a song, or a poem, or a visual painting, or a collage, or a video diary, or a dance, or a series of cartoons, or, or, or...

Attending - During this second year in particular, reflection groups rely heavily on your being present with the people in your small group. This “being present” involves not only attending class, but also attending to what your peers have offered.

*****Grading** - This is a P/F Course. A *pass* is considered as receiving at least 80 out of 100 points for the course, as well as submitting an attempt for all of the assignments (including at least half of the Tanka Poems). ***A passing grade in your Field Placement is also required in order to pass this course.***

CLASS POLICIES

CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality is a matter of ethics in ministry. It is the trustworthy use of information to assure appropriate care of those who seek our assistance. It is not synonymous with keeping a secret (Lebacqz, *Professional Ethics*, 1985). Rather, it requires being accountable for honoring another's trust while assuring the best possible care for them. Accountability may warrant consultation. In this course, for instance, we ask you to develop case material from your ministry settings for consultation with your classmates and the teaching team. To do such consultation responsibly, any identifying information is adequately disguised and the cases are shredded after class.

Confidentiality applies in many situations in our course. Confidentiality should be kept appropriately regarding discussions in supervisory meetings and in small groups. Confidentiality should also be considered when writing about events in your journals.

In this age of social networking, students are reminded that ethics in ministry extend to the life we live online. Postings about confidential pastoral and congregational matters in the field education setting on social networking sites are inappropriate and may become actionable legal, ecclesial, and disciplinary matters. Students are also advised to be careful and prudent about the personal data they share on such sites; despite the presumption of privacy, these social networks can be shared with third parties, including ordaining bodies, seminary officials, and church authorities.

DISCUSSION: For ours to be an open classroom where freedom to speak and respect for all are assured, we need to agree that comments and expressions of belief that may be at variance with those of the instructors, another student, or our own must be respected, heard, and treated fairly. We hope this same attitude prevails where students serve and is modeled by them in these settings.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: Learning is fundamentally linked to communication, self-expression, and personal and social transformation. It respects individuals, their feelings, and their particular potential for contribution to common knowledge. Learning is fundamentally and intentionally inclusive. Since all learning is inherently ethical and political, and theological discourse traditionally has been patriarchal and gender exclusive, the Seminary has established a policy, in the interest of the construction of a learning community, that the language (symbols, metaphors) used in our class discussions and written work will be gender inclusive and respectful of all persons and groups as valued human creatures of God. Racism and white privilege, homophobia and transphobia, ageism, and prejudice toward people with physical and intellectual disabilities also permeate our society and are detrimental to any learning environment. We need to use language, symbols, and metaphors that honor our commitment to being a community respectful and welcoming of difference and opposed to all forms of social oppression.

Direct quotations from theological texts and Bible translations do not have to be altered to conform to this policy (though they can be). In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from this portion of the LPTS website:

<https://www.lpts.edu/assets/documents/guides/InclusiveandExpansiveLanguage.pdf>

FROM THE DEAN'S OFFICE

USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

CITATION POLICY: Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

ATTENDANCE POLICY: According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences ([3 per semester]; 1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.